

the American people from terrorist threats. He must ensure that we do everything within the law to defend the security of all Americans, while at the same time protecting the liberty of all Americans.

Judge Michael Mukasey is the right man to take on these vital challenges. Michael understands the law from both sides of the bench. He served for more than 18 years as a U.S. District Court judge in New York, including 6 years as the chief judge. He was a lawyer in private practice. He served as an Assistant United States Attorney in Manhattan, where he headed the Official Corruption Unit.

Judge Mukasey also understands the challenges facing our Nation in this time of war. He has written wisely on matters of constitutional law and national security. He knows what it takes to fight the war on terror effectively, and he knows how to do it in a manner that is consistent with our laws and our Constitution. He will bring clear purpose and resolve to the job of Attorney General. I look forward to working with him as a member of my Cabinet and a key player on our national security team.

Our new Attorney General—as our new Attorney General, Michael Mukasey follows in the footsteps of a fine man and a fine American, Al Gonzales. I have known Al since our days working together in the State of Texas. As White House Counsel and as Attorney General in my administration, Al Gonzales worked tirelessly to make this country safer and to ensure that all Americans received equal justice before the law. Over many years, I have witnessed his integrity, his decency, and his deep dedication to the cause of justice. I am grateful for his friendship. I thank him for his service to our Nation. And Laura and I wish him and his wife, Becky, and their children, Jared, Graham, and Gabe, all the very best.

I also thank Peter Keisler, who has served as Acting Attorney General during Judge Mukasey's confirmation process. Peter delayed his plans to leave the Justice Department in order to ensure that the Department had strong leadership during these past months. I appreciate the job you've done.

With his departure, many of the most senior positions at the Department of Justice will

now be vacant. In a time of war, it's vital that these positions be filled quickly. So in consultation with the Attorney General, I will announce tomorrow my nominations for several of these senior leadership positions. And I look forward to working with the Senate to fill these important positions at the Justice Department, so that America has the strongest, most capable national security team in place.

As he embarks on his new responsibilities, Michael Mukasey has my complete trust and confidence. And he's going to have the trust and confidence of the men and women of the Department of Justice. The people here are good people, hard-working Americans. From the headquarters to U.S. Attorneys' offices to remote posts overseas, these fine Americans, Judge, are working to keep the American people safe. They work everyday to fulfill the most important function of the Federal Government, and that's to protect the American people from harm. Their efforts are essential to the security of America. The people who work for Justice deserve the very best leadership, and you're going to have it with Judge Michael Mukasey.

You'll find out what I found out. Judge Mukasey is a decent man, an outstanding lawyer, and a strong leader, and I am really looking forward to his wise counsel in the months ahead. Judge, I want to thank you for agreeing to serve our country once again, and congratulations.

And now I ask Chief Justice John Roberts to administer the oath of office.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:12 a.m. in the Great Hall at the Department of Justice. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Mukasey.

Remarks on Presenting the National Medal of Arts and National Humanities Medal

November 15, 2007

The President. Thank you all. Good morning. Laura and I welcome you to the East Room for a joyous event, the presentation of two sets of important awards: the National Medals of the Arts and the National

Humanities Medals. These medals recognize great contributions to art, music, theater, writing, history, and general scholarship.

We congratulate the medalists. We welcome your families. We thank your loved ones for supporting you. And on behalf of a grateful nation, we honor your great talent and accomplishments.

Obviously, I'm pleased to be here with my wife. *[Laughter]* I am proud to be here with Mrs. Lynne Cheney as well. I thank the Members of the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives for joining us as we honor our fellow citizens. I'm so pleased to welcome Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, and Dr. Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities. Thank you all for coming, and thank you for your leadership. I'm proud that a fellow Texan, Adair Margo—is the Chairman of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities—has joined us.

Our honorees represent the great strength and diversity of the American culture. The winners of the arts include a Native American poet, an orchestra conductor, a composer of choral music, a pioneer of electric musical instruments, and a man whose last name is synonymous with fine American craftsmanship. Our honorees have created some of the emblematic images of our time, supported museums and theaters, and helped nurture young talent.

The winners of the humanities have also made great and lasting contributions to our society. They include scholars and historians and a philanthropist. These men and women have shaped our understanding of the past, chronicled stories of tyranny overcome by liberty, and helped preserve our cultural treasures for future generations.

Your accomplishments will remind us that freedom of thought and freedom of expression are two pillars of our democracy. These freedoms have helped our Nation build some of the finest centers of learning in the world. They've helped inspire new movements in art and literature, and they've helped fill our libraries and museums and theaters with great works for all our citizens to enjoy.

America is committed to supporting the arts and humanities. For more than four dec-

ades, the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities has helped enrich our culture and deepened our appreciation for the ideals that bind us together as Americans. Some interesting programs that are run out of these important institutions, like "We the People" and "American Masterpieces," that expose a new generation of Americans to American history and literature and art. And Laura and I strongly support these programs.

It is now my privilege to present the National Medals of Art and the National Humanities Medals. Once again, I congratulate our honorees because in your work, we see the creativity of the American spirit and the values that have made our Nation great.

And so now I ask the military aide to read the citations.

[At this point, Lt. Cmdr. Dan Walsh, USCG, Coast Guard Aide to the President, read the citations, and the President presented the medals.]

The President. My wife.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:03 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lynne Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters and Federal Aviation Administration Acting Administrator Robert A. Sturgell

November 15, 2007

Thanksgiving is a week from today, and Christmas will quickly follow. This is really a time of joy for our families. Unfortunately, this is also a season of dread for too many Americans. Holiday travelers faced with the prospect of long-delayed and canceled flights and lost baggage and other problems have become all too often an occurrence. In other words, there's a lot of people that are worried about traveling because they've had unpleasant experiences when they've been flying around the country.